

What is claimed is:

1. A work flow system for circulating a digital document file to a plurality of clients through a network, comprising:

a transmission client for initially issuing a document file for circulation, further comprising:

a) a setup processing means for setting destination information to specify destination and order of circulation, and

b) a transmission processing means for sending a circulation information file, including said destination information, and said document file to the next one of a plurality of circulation clients, which is preset so in said destination information; and  
said plurality of circulation clients for sequentially circulating said document file, transmitted by said transmission client, each comprising:

a) a transmission processing means for sending said circulation information file and said document file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, which is preset so in said destination information, in response to a verification of said document file.

2. The work flow system of claim 1, one of said plurality of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, sends a transmission completion report, regardless of said document file, to said next one of said plurality of circulation clients.

3. The work flow system of claim 2, wherein said transmission completion report is sent to a predetermined server in said network; and said predetermined server sends circulation state information in response to a request from one of said transmission client and said plurality of circulation clients.

4. The work flow system of claim 1, wherein said circulation information file includes report destination information regarding a reporting destination of said transmission completion report.

5. The work flow system of claim 4, wherein said one of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, sends said transmission

completion report, regardless of said document file, to said next one of said plurality of circulation clients in accordance with said report destination information.

6. The work flow system of claim 5, wherein said reporting destination is a server for controlling a circulation of said document file; said one of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, sends said transmission completion report to said server; and said server sends circulation state information in response to a request from one of said transmission client and said plurality of circulation clients in accordance with said transmission completion report.

7. The work flow system of claim 6, wherein said circulation state information includes a state to which one of said plurality of circulation clients said document file for circulation is circulated, or a state with which one of said plurality of circulation clients said document file is confirmed.

8. The work flow system of claim 5, wherein said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients and having received said transmission completion report, deletes or makes it possible to delete said document file and said circulation information file from a memory portion.

9. The work flow system of claim 1, wherein said circulation information file includes storage location information of a storage destination after the circulation of said document file; and one of said plurality of circulation clients, to which said document file is circulated at last, stores said document file to said storage destination in said storage location information in response to a approval operation of said document file.

10. The work flow system of claim 1, wherein said document file for circulation is created from an original document file stored in a predetermined storage; said circulation information file includes original information of a storage destination of said original document and storage location

information of a storage destination after the circulation of said document file; and one of said plurality of circulation clients, to which said document file is circulated at last, obtains said original document file in response to a approval operation of said document file in accordance with said original information, and stores said original document to said storage destination of said storage location information.

11. The work flow system of claim 1, wherein said one of plurality of circulation clients, having received said document file and circulation information file, adds history information including a verification result of said document file to said circulation information file and sends said document file and circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients.

12. The work flow system of claim 1, wherein said circulation information file includes time limit information for circulation time limit of said document file; and said one of plurality of circulation clients, having received said document file and circulation information file, requests a approval operation of said document file when said

circulation time limit of said time limit information is expired.

13. The work flow system of claim 1, said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients, sending said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, encrypts said document file before sending said document file.

14. The work flow system of claim 1, wherein said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients, sending said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, notifies incapability of circulation by said next one of said plurality of circulation clients to other ones of said plurality of circulation clients or said transmission client when said next one of said plurality of circulation clients is incapable of circulation.

15. The work flow system of claim 1, wherein said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients, sending said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of

circulation clients, sends said document file and said circulation information file to other one of said plurality of circulation clients next to said next one of said plurality of circulation clients or a proxy client of said next one of said plurality of circulation clients when said next one of plurality of circulation clients is incapable of circulation.

16. The work flow system of claim 1, wherein said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation clients, sending said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, is selectable of either sending said document file and said circulation information file to other one of said plurality of circulation clients except said next one of said plurality of circulation clients or sending said document file and said circulation information file to a proxy client of said next one of said plurality of circulation clients when said next one of plurality of circulation clients is incapable of circulation.

17. The work flow system of claim 1, wherein said transmission client or one of said plurality of circulation

clients, having received said document file and said circulation information file, adds correction information, for making a correction on said document file, to said circulation information file and sends said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality circulation clients.

18. The work flow system of claim 1, wherein one of said plurality of circulation clients, to which said document file is circulated at last, sends circulation completion report to other ones of said plurality of circulation clients in response to a approval operation of said document file.

19. The work flow system of claim 1, wherein said transmission client or each of said plurality of circulation clients comprises:

an information processing means for processing electronic information; and

a storage means for storing a file which is readable with said information processing means;

wherein said storage means stores said document file or said circulation information file when said document file or said circulation information file is received.

20. The work flow system of claim 19, wherein said transmission client or each of said plurality of circulation clients comprises a display means for displaying a transmission button and sends said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, which is preset so in said circulation information file, so as to be stored in said storage means of said next one of said plurality of circulation clients in response to an operation of said transmission button.

21. A work flow system for circulating a digital document file to a plurality of circulation clients through a network, each one of said plurality of circulation clients comprising:

- a) a setup processing means for setting destination information to specify destination and order of circulation, and
- b) a transmission processing means for sending a circulation information file, including said destination information, and said document file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, which is preset so in said destination information;

wherein said circulation information file includes report destination information for specifying a reporting destination of a transmission completion report; and one of said plurality of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, sends a transmission completion report, regardless of said document file, to said reporting destination in accordance with said report destination information.

22. The work flow system of claim 21, wherein said reporting destination is a server for controlling a circulation of said document file; said one of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, sends said transmission completion report to said server; and said server sends circulation state information in response to a request from one of said transmission client and said plurality of circulation clients in accordance with said transmission completion report.

23. The work flow system of claim 22, wherein said circulation state information includes a state to which one

of said plurality of circulation clients said document file for circulation is circulated, or a state with which one of said plurality of circulation clients said document file is confirmed.

24. A client in a work flow system for circulating a digital document file through a network, comprising:

a setup processing means for setting destination information to specify destination and order of circulation, and

a transmission processing means for sending a circulation information file, including said destination information, and said document file to the next one of a plurality of circulation clients, which is preset so in said destination information;

wherein said circulation information file includes report destination information for specifying a reporting destination of a transmission completion report; and one of said plurality of circulation clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of circulation clients, sends a transmission completion report, regardless of said document

file, to said reporting destination in accordance with said report destination information.

25. A software product for circulating a digital document file through a network, comprising:

a) a setup processing means for setting circulation destination information to specify a destination and an order of circulation as circulation information file,

b) a first transmission processing means for sending said circulation information file to the next one of a plurality of circulation clients, which is preset so in said circulation destination information, and

c) a second transmission processing means for sending a transmission completion report to a specific server in accordance with report destination information, wherein said circulation information file includes said report destination information for specifying a reporting destination of said transmission completion report.

26. The software product of claim 25, wherein said specific server controls a circulation of said document file; and said specific server sends circulation state information in

response to a request from one of said transmission client and said plurality of circulation clients.

27. A work flow system for circulating a digital document file on the network accessed by a plurality of clients, wherein a circulation information file, regarding circulation of said document file, is sent and circulated in said network together with said document file.

28. The work flow system of claim 27, wherein said circulation information file includes circulation destination information to specify a destination of circulation.

29. The work flow system of claim 28, wherein said circulation destination information includes circulation order information to specify an order of circulation.

30. The work flow system of claim 28, wherein one of said plurality of clients, having received said document file, sends said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of clients, which is preset so in said circulation destination information, in response to a confirmation operation of said document file.

31. The work flow system of claim 27, wherein said circulation information file includes storage location information of a storage destination after the circulation of said document file.

32. The work flow system of claim 31, wherein one of said plurality of clients, to which said document file is circulated at last, stores said document file to said storage destination in said storage location information in response to a approval operation of said document file.

33. The work flow system of claim 27, wherein said circulation information file includes correction information for recording a correction on said document file.

34. The work flow system of claim 33, wherein said document file to be circulated is an original document file before modifications.

35. The work flow system of claim 27, wherein said circulation information file includes history information for

recording confirmation results of each one of said plurality of clients which has circulated said document file.

36. The work flow system of claim 27, wherein said circulation information file includes time limit information regarding circulation time limit of said document file.

37. The work flow system of claim 36, wherein one of said plurality of clients, having received said document file, requests a approval operation of said document file when said circulation time limit of said time limit information is expired.

38. The work flow system of claim 27, wherein said circulation information file includes report destination information regarding a reporting destination for issuing a transmission completion report that said document file is transmitted to next one of said plurality of clients; and one of said plurality of clients, having sent said document file and said circulation information file to the next one of said plurality of clients, sends a transmission completion report to said reporting destination.

39. The work flow system of claim 27, wherein said circulation information file includes approval requirement/non-requirement information regarding whether an approval operation of said document file is required or not to each of said plurality of clients.

40. A work flow system for circulating a digital document file on a network accessed by a plurality of clients, wherein one of said plurality of clients, having received said document file, sends a verified document file to the next one of said plurality of clients in response to approval operation of said document file and sends a transmission completion report to other one of said plurality of clients.

41. The work flow system of claim 40, wherein said other one of said plurality of clients is the one having sent said document file previously to said one of said plurality of clients, having received said document file and sends said transmission completion report.

42. The work flow system of claim 40, wherein said other one of said plurality of clients is the one having sent said document file initially.

43. A work flow system for circulating a digital document file on a network accessed by a plurality of clients, wherein one of said plurality of clients, receiving a circulated document file at last, sends a circulation completion report to other ones of said plurality of clients to notify a completion of circulation, in response to the verification of said circulated document file.

44. The work flow system of claim 43, wherein one of said plurality of clients, having received said circulation completion report, deletes or makes it possible to delete said document file.